ALMA RECORD

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ALMA, : : MICH

LAST year was a peaceful one for Europe, and this year is likely to be the same. War preparations, however, go right on just the same, and the people's burdens are increasing.

A WICKED foreigner, visiting our shores some years ago, noted the fact that whenever the Indians are whipped it is a "glorious victory," and whenever the pale faces are defeated it is an "atrocious massacre."

IT must be discouraging to rich men who desire to leave their property to educational institutions to reflect that it has become almost impossible to do so without the estate having to stand a long and expensive lawsuit.

IT is all very nice to hear our country called the land of the free and the asylum for the oppressed, but when it comes to making it the world's poorhouse, or a stomach for receiving all the non-assimilating refuse of creation, the poetry of the thing oozes out pretty fast.

IT takes only about $100 to buy a patent leg of the best kind, but it is worth much more than that for some men to risk their lives on one. Everything considered, the safest, most durable wooden leg is the old "stiff lumber toe" of one straight piece. It has no weakness in its joints.

IT is a great pleasure to be able to speak of a man's good qualities. You very often hear men speak approvingly of another's mode of business or character, frequently alluding to his integrity, honesty, or probity as a business man. All this is very nice and makes a man feel that he is living a good life, trying to do something for himself as well as his fellow man.

IT is impossible to please everybody, and you amount to anything. If you stand firmly for the right, those in the wrong will hate you. If you be for a public measure, those opposed to it will oppose you; if you like and befriend your own friends, their enemies will dislike you. There is no way of pleasing everybody but to evaporate.

THERE seems to be no doubt that the success of Dr. Koch in dealing with the problem of tuberculosis will lead, if it has not already led, to a great advance along the line of bacteriological treatment. It will not be long before all contagious and poisonous diseases are met and combated by the same methods. Diptheria will be unquestionably one of the next in the list of experiments.

"The cranks," said a man who is described as a crank, "are now a very powerful body in the United States. We have cranks in religion and politics and in society and in finance and in everything else. Then we have cranks and partial cranks and men who are just a little bit cranky and others who seem to be cranky only on one subject. If you were to count us all in, we would look like a very big force."

If Mr. Eiffel should visit the world's fair at Chicago in 1893 he would be compelled to admit that the famous tower which he designed and erected for the recent Paris exposition was a small and contemptible affair compared with the one which will there meet the astonished gaze. The Eiffel tower will be completely outdone by enterprising Chicago capitalists. They intend to "see" Mr. Eiffel and go him two feet better. They will erect a tower which, instead of stopping at the height of Eiffel's—1,000 feet—will be pushed skyward to the altitude of 2,000 feet.

THE hog, or as he is termed in unfashionable Ireland, "the gintleman that pays the rint," assumes proportions in America as a commercial industry in connection with agricultural pursuits, that is beyond any if not all other nations.

And whatever may be said in the invidious comparison between American breeders of other branches of live stock, and his British cousins, or some of the old country farmers, the American hog-raiser or breeder is beyond all question ahead of all other competitors both in the quality and quantity of hogs produced—so far so, indeed, that it is quite unnecessary to discuss this phase of the question.

It was now nearly one hundred years ago that amiable clergyman, Mr. Malthus, made himself famous by speculating upon the increase of population. As he figured it this little world of ours was in imminent danger of being fairly overrun by folks, and the resources exhausted in a vain attempt to keep the human family supplied with food and the other necessaries of life. As seen from the window of his study the world was a million above the Niagara, steadily nearing the inevitable catastrophe and would, unless some unforeseen rope of rescue was thrown out to it, go over the falls. But subsequent philosophising on the subject has dissipated that apprehension. Geometrical progression is one of the fixed factors of arguments of all kinds, but it has its limitations.

A LOON ON THE LAKE.

ONE OF NATURE'S QUEER FREAKS IN BIRDS.

Its Weird and Tragic Cries a Frequent Cause of Alarm for Tenderfeet—Difficulty in Shooting Them—How the Bird Laughs.

"When nature turned the loon out of her workshop she completed a job at once bold and original," said an old and observant native of the Lake Keuka country, according to a writer in the New York Sun. "It is safe to call the loon either a bird or an animal, for it has the feathers of one, the fur of the other and the heart of both. The fur is on the breast and neck and under side of the loon's body. It is much of the same quality as a beaver's. A cloak made of loon's fur would be a dainty wrap for the dantiest lady in this or any other land. The feathers of a loon cover its back and wings. They are soft and fleecy, but as hard to pluck as pulling teeth. They have a peculiarity that nothing in nature except porcupines' quills have. Loons' feathers have the same peculiarity, and it is impossible to keep them inside of a pillow or a cushion two hours at a time.

The loon is particularly gifted with a voice. At one time this curious creature can frighten the life out of you, almost, by snorting for all the world like an enraged bear, and the next minute will surprise you by cooing almost as softly as a ring dove. But night is the time when the loon comes out strongest as a striking vocalist. No one who hears for the first time the song of the loon at night, amid the solitude of a lakeside camp, high among isolated hills, will ever be able to forget it. In the summer, when the nights are moonlit, the loon seems best to love to show his accomplishments in a vocal way. The greatest of these is its power of ventriloquism. If you have lived much in the vicinity of backwoods lakes, you have undoubtedly often heard woodsmen tell of the ventriloquial gifts of the loon, but if you never had auricular proof of it you, of course, doubted the existence of such a power. You won't doubt it after you hear it. I will never forget the time I was convinced of it. I had seen plenty of loons here on Lake Keuka, but I had never been where they spent their summers. One summer I was camping in the North Woods with a native guide. Our tent was only a few feet from the shore of one of the numerous small lakes in that region. I lay in the tent one night, watching the spectral play of the moonbeams on the water, in and out among the shadows, gilding the noiseless ripples till the surface seemed a burnished sheet of hammered brass. The silence was oppressive. Suddenly there arose from the lake, and apparently from its farthest shore, a prolonged, half-satisfied wail. It gradually increased in volume until it was almost a shriek, which died away in a wail similar to the one with which the startling cry had begun. The wail was still in my ears when a blood-curdling yell—a yell expressive of supreme terror, smote the silence. It came from somewhere on the shore, near the tent and to the right of it. This frightful yell ended in a wild burst of demonical sound. It was still echoing through the forest when, from the left shore of the lake, and far away, a moan, as of utter hopelessness and despair, broke on the solemn stillness, rising and falling away into silence with a cadence so sad that a sense of most burdening melancholy succeeded to the influence of the forest's midnight quiet. As soon as I could shake off the depression it weighed me with I arose hurriedly and seized my gun. I awoke my companion and told him of the fearful sounds I had heard.

My companion pointed to the lake. There, gliding slowly on the surface, its long neck and bill outlined distinctly as it floated in the moonlight, was the loon. It had come out from the shadows near the shore, not three rods away. I stepped forward quickly with my gun. Instantly the long neck disappeared and a rim of shimmering ripples on the surface of the lake alone marked the spot where the strange creature had been.

"'When he comes up ag'in he'll mo'rn likely be a mile away" said the guide. 'You won't see him ag'in tonight, but the chances is that you'll hear him.'

"Perhaps five minutes passed, and then two loud, wild, staccato notes, sounding but a few rods away, came from the lake. They were quickly followed by a series of exultant chuckles, which seemed near when they began, but grew fainter with each succeeding chuckle until the last one was heard but faintly in the distance.

"But the greatest accomplishment a loon has is its power of dodging a bullet. At the flash of a gun the creature will disappear beneath the water so quickly that you can scarcely believe you have seen one. A marksman who hits a loon in the open lake without the use of strategem has done the most difficult thing a man can do with a gun. Sometimes a loon will come to the surface within a short distance of the spot where it went down, and frequently it will travel a mile or more before rising. A loon uses not only its strong feet and legs in its submarine flight, but its wings as well. It will go through the density of the water with a speed almost as great as that of a crow flying through the thin and buoyant air. While it is next to impossible to kill a loon when it has its eyes on your movements on the open lake, its over-weening curiosity will make it an easy victim. A red handkerchief or gay-colored cloth of any kind, displayed on a pole or buoy in the water, will attract every loon that may be within seeing distance of the lure.

"Early in the spring, when loons are on their way from the south to their northern retreats, they drop down into the mountain retreats where the ice has thawed and broken up near the inlets and outlets, leaving small spaces of open water. When they have trusted themselves to these contracted resting places they cannot get out again until the ice has melted away sufficiently to leave an opening at least an eighth of a mile long or wide. A loon cannot rise from the water without having as much of a start as that. When a loon makes up its mind to leave a lake or change its quarters it runs rapidly on the water, its long neck and beak extended full length, and its wings flapping up and down with a loud noise and scattering of the water. Gradually the dip of the wing grows less and less. The ascent of the bird increases. The tips of the wings just touch the water, leaving two ruffled lines on the surface. Finally the bird has gained momentum enough to enable it to come free into the air, and it rises gracefully upward, always seeking a height out of gunshot range. When loons are surprised in the early spring in ice openings they are easily killed. They seem to know that they dare not dive under the surrounding body of ice, and so they huddle together in the narrow space, at the mercy of any ruthless gunner who may chance upon them."

A Partner Wanted.

At Wichita, Kan., I had to occupy a room at the hotel with a stranger, who told me that he lived about fifty miles away on a ranch. We got along all right for three or four days, and then, one night as we went to bed, he asked:

"You kin read and write, can't ye?"

"Yes."

"I sorter mistrusted you could. What do you call this thing they get out about a new town?"

"Do you mean a prospectus?"

"That's it. Kin you write one?"

"I think so."

"Kin you draw a sort o' map?"

"Yes."

"Just as lief lie as not?"

"No, sir."

"Well don't get hot. Here's what I want. I've got 200 acres of land thirty-five miles from anywhar, and it's too cussed poor for a jack-rabbit to even run over. I want to lay out a town thar and sell off $50,000 worth of lots before the end of the month. It kin be done if I kin git the right sort of partner."

"You want a liar, eh?"

"Got to be. He's got to lie a river alongside that property, two railroads across it, 15,000 population into the county, and then bring in a lot of churches, schools, and factories to gild it off. I'll give you half."

"No, I couldn't."

"All right—no harm done. If you are not a liar that settles it, and we won't have no hard feelings."

Six weeks later I met him in a bank in Omaha just as he was depositing $27,000, and he held out his hand and said: "Shoo! Is it you? Wish you had come in ten minutes ago and seen my liar holding up his half of the deal. Conscientious scruples, eh? Well, some folks has 'em, and when they does it's all right, and no hard feelings on my part."—N. Y. Sun.

Clarisse.

Kiss you! Wherefore should I, sweet?
Casual kissing I condemn;
Other lips your lips will meet
When my kisses die on them.
Should I grieve that this should be?
Nay, if you will kiss, kiss me!

Love you? That were vainer still!
If you win my love to-day,
When the morrow comes you will
Lightly laugh that love away.
Should I grieve that this should be?
Nay, if you must love, love me.

Wherefore play these fickle parts?
Life and love will soon be done;
Thank you God made human hearts
Just for you to tread upon!
Will you break them, nor repine?
If you will, Clarisse, break mine!

—Frank L. Stanton.

By Proxy.

"John," said the Rev. Mr. Goodman to his hired man, "are you a Christian?"

"Why—er—no, sir," replied John.

"Do you ever swear?"

"I—I'm sometimes a little keerless like in my talk."

"I am sorry, John," rejoined Mr. Goodman. "But we will converse about this some other time. I wish you would take this money and settle this bill of $1 for thawing out a water pipe, and talk to the man in a careless kind of way as if it was your own bill."

Their Own Risk.

Missionaries to China assume their own risk. If one is robbed or killed the Chinese government does not consider it a legal claim for damages and will not entertain it. Native Chinese who may be butchered by the anti-Christians are hardly considered worthy of being reported on.

SKYLARK OF FICTION.

HE IS NO SUCH SINGER OR SOARER AS THE WORLD HAS BELIEVED.

So at Least, an Ornithologist Has Discovered—The Nightingale Is Not Quite so Overrated a Warbler.

The skylark and the nightingale, as generally accepted by mankind, are fictions. This may be easily learned at first hand, for as both birds are common in their haunts and widely distributed in Europe, the fiction appears to be much better known than the birds themselves.

The skylark of fiction, says a correspondent in the N. Y. *Evening Post*, in Lucerne, Switzerland, it may be well to state, is a songster of surpassing ability, whose habitual station while singing is at a point sufficiently above the earth's surface to render him invisible to the naked eye. His music descends as if from heaven itself, challenging the admiration of the densest clodhopper, and lifting the cultured soul to dizzy heights of sentiment.

The real skylark has, indeed, the habit of singing on the wing; doubtless he sometimes mounts high enough to become invisible; there is good evidence to that effect. But he certainly prefers to be within easy optical range. Though I do not myself profess to have acquired a perfect familiarity with his habits, I have studied him in many parts of Europe; I have watched him patiently, sympathetically, hopefully, for hours at a time, and never have I known him to reach an altitude at which he could not be seen plainly by any normal eye. More than this, he delights to sing upon the ground. Very often, indeed, when a careless listener—having in mind the lark of fiction—believes him out of sight in the sky, he is to be found in some favorite spot a-perch.

The lark possesses a voice of mediocre quality, and produces a song far inferior to those of many other birds. At best his music is canary like; at worst it is positively insectile. Distance does not enhance its effect. On the contrary the farther away the singing bird, the harsher and shriller his performance.

But let me do the lark justice. He is one of the most cheery and indefatigable of bird singers. Be it fair or foul, be it sultry or chill his stridulous notes may be heard from morning till night in the season. I have seen him exulting over snow-covered fields in Switzerland—when June had suddenly produced a day with the characteristics of December—as heartily and persistently as if he had looked down upon the greenest meadows and the gayest flowers. Such thoroughgoing optimism has a charm of its own; and one listens to the lark with approval and pleasure in spite of his musical deficiencies.

Need it be said that the nightingale of fiction is the incomparable songster, who through all the hours of daylight lurks perdu, silent, melancholy, but in the depths of night transcends imagination with his melody? On the morning of May 3 I was walking in the park of Vincennes, with an eye to the birds. Not far from the old chateau I was brought to a stop by a loud thrush-like song, which came from a thicket at a distance of half-a-dozen paces. I did not know the song, and I drew my field-glass out of its case and took up a position behind the nearest tree in the hope of identifying the musician. His strain was at once repeated. I noted that it was quite complicated, and that it was delivered with much boldness and decision; but it did not impress me as being of unusual excellence. Yet, a moment later, as the singer descended to the ground just before me to secure a tidbit that had caught his eye, I discovered that I had been listening to a nightingale. The bird saw me at the same instant, and, with a short, guttural note of alarm, disappeared in his thicket. I waited attendance upon his pleasure for some time afterward, but in vain; he neither showed himself again nor favored me with another song.

I walked many kilometers about Vincennes that day, and I found several other nightingales within its boundaries, all of them more or less tuneful, no one of them the accomplished singer I was prepared to hear. Two days later I had a similar experience at St. Cloud. But I told myself that I must hear the bird at night before I should be competent to pass judgment upon his abilities, and on the 7th of May I went out from Paris to the Forest of St. Germain en Laye, to that end.

It was a fine morning and a hot one upon which I entered the forest. At high noon, when I first heard the song of Daulias luscinia, the local thermometers must have indicated a temperature of about 80 degrees in the shade. Nevertheless, that same first song was one of the best I have ever heard produced by any nightingale under any circumstances—a really delightful outpouring, rivaling in its ardor the love-songs of the boboluk and the purple finch. It was an admirable performance but it was not by any means a matchless one. I felt that it was richly worth hearing again. It was not repeated, however. And during the next four hours and a half, though I tramped about persistently, I heard only occasional distant and fragmentary songs by the nightingale.

The attempt has often been made to indicate by syllabication the character of the nightingale's song but never with success, "me judice. He executes so rapidly, so audaciously, and with such frequent variation of theme, that a listener must be clever indeed to outline in the crudest manner any one of his longer airs: and no arrangement of his syllables, however accurate, can convey an idea of the peculiar, clarinet-like richness of the bird's voice. It might be the voice of an oriole, or of a mocking-thrush—perhaps of a wagtail (Seiurus); some of its tones are reproduced at times by our common cardinal redbird; yet it has a distinct individuality. It lacks pathos and sweetness. The songs of the hermit thrush, the grass-finch, the ruby crowned king let and the winter wren—to seek no further—have these qualities in a far higher degree than the nightingale's. In fact, it is only in the variety of his musical productions that he excels at all. He is a singer of many words and many methods of expression. Perhaps it is on this account that he seldom renders any one of his arias superlatively well, and often seems to be merely extemporizing. There is always, to be sure, one of a few characteristic themes present in his music, but so embellished, according to the caprice of the moment that the popular saying, "The nightingale never repeats himself," may be said to be founded at least upon fact.

THE CLUMSY RATTLESNAKE.

He Misses Much Oftener than He Hits When at Work.

Rattlesnakes are more poisonous in print than in their native wilds. The southwestern plains abound in these dingy reptiles, and I had ample opportunity to judge of their character and performances, both of which fall below report. The rattlesnake has a short, flat, wide head. Besides the red and forked tongue, of which he makes display when bullied, his mouth is unholstered with two fangs which are in the upper jaw, and correspond in position to the eye-teeth of mankind. These fangs in a serpent of common size are about three-fifths of an inch long and have a slight curve like a cimeter and hook inward. They are white in color, of the diameter of a needle and hollow from root to point. Their root or seat is in a sac containing the poison, which is loosened and flows through the tube-like fang as a result of the muscular exertion of striking. It does not flow, but spurts, and two tiny jets of poison intended for the victim distill into the air every time the rattlesnake strikes and misses. This last he does about four times out of five, for his snakeship is as clumsy and inaccurate as a woman with a rock. I have seen one miss a full grown merino sheep three times in succession. In serpents as in alligators the upper, not the lower, jaw is the one that moves to open the mouth. The fangs, working on a sort of hinge, are closed like the blade of a knife when the mouth is closed and are presented for business by the action of throwing back the upper jaw.

The mere fact of opening the jaw always discloses the fangs without any separate effort on the part of the serpent, and when the mouth is closed again two fleshy envelopes, or scabbards, cover them from doing or receiving harm. This is necessary, as a rattlesnake's poison is just as bad medicine for himself as for any one else.

These fangs have all the limber pliability of the finest steel and can be bent or put in any posture by a little force, but will at once spring into shape on being relieved.

As to the deadly character of his reptileship I can only say that I have seen numberless horses, steers and sheep which were bitten by rattlers, always in the nose and head, and never one died. They were sick from a day to a month, and their heads would become swollen and the candidates would mope about the prairie in a dejected way, but they came around all right as a finale. I never knew a man to die, although I have known some few to get stung. Whisky in a copious way as an internal and a poultice of pounded onions and salt as an outward application were all that was needed. I have known some topers, who knew there was whisky in the wagons, to go about looking for the bite of a rattlesnake as eagerly as some anglers seek bass, just for the glorious drunk that was sequential to it. Such persons, however, are not common.

Some few people like snakes as pets. They will remove a rattler's fangs by breaking them off with a silk handkerchief, and so make the gentleman harmless. To those who may hereafter perform this feat as a primary step toward becoming intimate with the rattlesnake, I wish to say a word of warning. These fangs are of a similar growth to the finger nails of humanity, and, when torn out, readily replace themselves with a new growth. Your pet will be ready to do business on the old lines in six weeks after you have pulled his teeth; so beware.—*Kansas City Star.*

A Remarkable Discovery.

A remarkable discovery was recently made in the neighboring town of Oneonta, New York State, where a company is engaged in digging phosphates from the depths of a swamp. In one place the marsh is underlaid, at a depth of twelve feet, by an impervious stratum of blue clay, above which are found evidences of three successive and distinct eras of forest growth. The bottom layer is of deciduous trees that grow only on uplands, such as beech, oak and maple. The second layer is of soft swamp woods, such as alder, basswood and dogwood. The upper layer is of coniferous trees, such as pine, hemlock and spruce. The puzzle to the naturalist is the finding of upland trees at the bottom of the marsh, with the trunks and larger limbs and abundant specimens of leaves and beech nuts in a good state of preservation. Another wonder is the finding at a point five feet below the surface and among the trunks of the coniferous trees, of a flat stone about five feet square, which had been utilized as a fireplace. The blackened stone, the large collection of ashes and cinders and the bits of crumbling bones of animals indicate that long ages ago somebody cooked food there. That somebody must have been man in a strictly primitive and savage state, for no trace of any utensil or food, not even a sharpened flint, has been found among the debris of the fire.

At the Sunday-School Concert.

The Rev. X. Horter—"Now, all you little children, how many of you want to grow up to be good, honest men and women? Hands up, now!"

Bronco Bill (who has dropped in just in time to hear the last remark)—"All right, boss! But dern me if I expected t' come t' this section an' git robbed! In a church, too! The wooly West ain't the wust place, arter all!"—*Boston Traveller.*

A YANKEE VOTER.

Story of a Kansas County Election in Pioneer Days.

The next day, to their great discomfiture, our settlers blundered upon a county election. Trudging into Libertyville, one of the new mushroom towns springing up along the military road that leads from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley, they found a great crowd of people gathered around a log-house, in which the polls were open. County officers were to be chosen, and the pro-slavery men, as the borderers were now called in this part of the country, had rallied in great numbers to carry the election for their men. All was confusion and tumult. Rough-looking men, well-armed and generally loud-voiced, with slouched hats and long beards, were galloping about, shouting and making all the noise possible, for no purpose that could be discovered. "Hooray for Cap'n Pate!" was the only intelligible cry that the new-comers could hear; but who Captain Pate was, and why he should be hurrahed for, nobody seemed to know. He was not a candidate for anything.

"Hello! there's our Woburn friend, John Clark," said Mr. Howell. Sure enough, there he was with a vote in his hand going up to the cabin where the polls were open. A lane was formed through the crowd of men who lounged about the cabin, so that a man going up to the door to vote was obliged to run the gantlet, as it were, of one hundred men, or more, before he reached the door, the lower half of which was boarded up and the upper half left open for the election officers to take and deposit the ballots.

"I don't believe that man has any right to vote here," said Charlie, with an expression of disgust on his face. "Why, he came into the territory with us, only the other day, and he said he was going up on the Big Blue to settle, and here he is trying to vote!"

"Well," said Uncle Charlie, "I allow he has just as good a right to vote as any of these men who are running the election. I saw some of these very men come riding in from Missouri, when we were one day out of Quindaro." As he spoke, John Clark had reached the voting-place, pursued by many rough epithets flung after him.

He paused before the half-barricaded door and presented his ballot. "Let's see yer ticket!" shouted one of two men who stood guard, one on either side of the cabin-door. He snatched it from Clark's hand, looked at it and simply said, "H'ist!" The man on the other side of the would-be-voter grinned; then both men seized the Woburn man by his arms and waist, and before he could realize what was happening, he was flung up to the edge of the roof that projected over the low door. Two other men, sitting there grabbed the new-comer by the shoulders and passed him up the roof to two others, who, straddling the ridge-pole, were waiting for him. Then the unfortunate Clark disappeared over the top of the cabin, sliding down out of sight on the farther side. The mob set up a wild cheer and some of them shouted, "We don't want any Yankee votes in this yer 'lection!"—Noah Brooks, in St. Nicholas.

The Land Problem.

The land question in its various phases promises to become the leading issue in politics in other countries, as well as in Ireland, at no distant day. The connection between land distribution and prosperity is strikingly shown in the case of England and France. In the former, the laws of primogeniture and entail combine to continue a landed class who monopolize the soil; in the latter, estates are divided equally among the children, thus tending to small holdings and peasant proprietorship. As a result, chiefly, of these systems we find in England vast estates on which their owners live in princely manner surrounded by everything conducive to pleasure and dignified ease, while thousands and hundreds of thousands of acres are devoted to parks and hunting grounds, from which the tillers of the soil have gradually been driven to swell the increasing number of the landless, with the result, according to John Morley's estimate, that 45 per cent of the inhabitants of England who reach the age of sixty years become paupers. In France, on the contrary, where a different system prevails, the savings of the peasants constitute the wealth of the nation.

Early Training.

Fond mother—An' phwat did ye see at the dime museum, me darlint?

Small daughter—Oh, lots o' things, but the nicest was th' egg dance. You ought to see it. A little girl put some eggs in all sorts of queer rows all over the floor an' then they blinded her eyes and she danced all over everywhere around among th' eggs an' never broke one.

Fond mother—She must a bin brought up in one o' thim quality flats, all roogs an' bric-a-brac.—New York Weekly.

A Social Chat.

Daughter—I can't understand why you do not wish me to marry him, papa. He's the leading man in the little town where he resides.

Papa—That's just it. The big man in a little town is always a full-fledged autocrat. He'd compel you to black his boots for him.